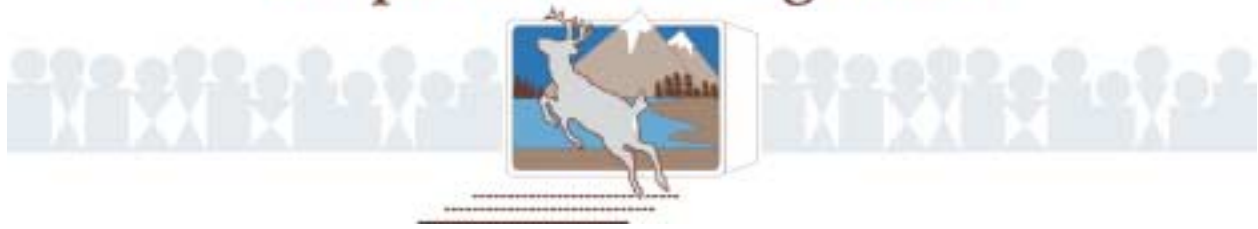


Responsive Management



Anglers' and Boaters' Attitudes Toward Various Messages that Communicate the Benefits of Fishing and Boating: Results of a Series of Nationwide Focus Groups

March 2001

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Harrisonburg, VA 22801

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of Fishing and Boating:
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Responsive Management National Office

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Four focus groups were conducted for the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation in early February 2001 with lapsed anglers and lapsed boaters in order to identify core messages that best communicate the benefits of recreational boating and fishing and aquatic stewardship and resonate well with the target audience. Two focus groups were conducted in Tampa, Florida, one with lapsed anglers and a separate group with lapsed boaters, while mixed groups of lapsed anglers and lapsed boaters were conducted in Denver, Colorado and Cleveland Ohio. “Lapsed” anglers and “lapsed” boaters were operationally defined as individuals who had taken part in recreational fishing and/or boating in the past 5 years, but not in the past 12 months.

Focus groups are an important method to test messages because they allow for extensive probing, follow-up questions, group discussion and observation of emotional reaction to various messages, aspects that can’t be measured in a traditional telephone or mail survey. Focus group research is considered “qualitative” research. Qualitative research sacrifices reliability for increased validity. This means that although focus group findings cannot be replicated statistically as can sample surveys (high reliability), they often give researchers a more valid view in getting to the heart of issues under study (high validity).

Twenty short, single sentence messages were tested. These messages were tested in two ways. First, focus group participants were asked to rate the message on a 1 to 10 Likert scale with one signifying that the statement “does not at all represent my positive thoughts about, and the importance of, recreational fishing and boating,” and ten signifying that the statement “very much represents my positive thoughts about, and the importance of, recreational fishing and boating.” The messages were also tested through a focus group discussion on each message. All of the messages were not tested in all of the groups. Some messages were so poorly received,

they were dropped in later focus groups. Other messages were reworded slightly to measure reaction to specific words.

The results of the groups were analyzed in three ways. One analysis was of the quantified results of the survey where participants rated each message on a scale of 1 – 10. Another analysis consisted of a qualitative assessment of each individual focus group. The third was a qualitative analysis of all of the groups combined. Thus, the recommendations presented in this report are based on an overall assessment of the survey results, individual focus group reactions and overall assessment of the messages that best communicated the benefits of recreational boating and fishing and aquatic stewardship with lapsed anglers and boaters. The various messages were evaluated on both a broad conceptual level as well as the effects of specific words. Both are important in developing effective messages.

Some messages and wording resonated strongly while other messages and wording did not. In fact, some messages actually elicited negative reactions, pointing out how important message testing actually is. If messages are viewed as unbelievable or erroneous, the speaker/communicator risks losing credibility at worst while at best wastes limited communications dollars and effort.

Reception to the messages fell into a few clear categories. Messages that resonated strongly were: 1) Messages that appealed to the value of recreational fishing and boating to fostering relationships among family and friends and 2) The relaxation value of recreational fishing and boating. The focus groups showed that the appreciation of natural resources was viewed as one aspect of relaxation, and therefore this association should be used wherever possible.

Messages that link recreational fishing and boating with “deeper” issues such as “legacy,” “heritage” or “tradition” do not resonate well among most lapsed anglers or boaters. The economic contributions of recreational fishing and boating to local economies also did not resonate well with many of the focus group respondents. Also many lapsed anglers and boaters did not see boating and fishing as contributing to the preservation and protection of natural resources. In fact, numerous individuals felt that recreational boating and fishing actually had negative impacts on the environment and that some recreational anglers and boaters harmed natural resources by “taking” fish and polluting the environment. Before using messages that stress the economic benefits or the contribution of recreational fishing and boating to the preservation of natural resources, major communications programs would need to be initiated to increase people’s understanding of the economic and natural resource benefits of recreational fishing and boating.

Lapsed anglers and boaters, in general, preferred specificity over generalities in the messages. For example, “family and friends” was preferred over the term “people.” Although the term “on the water” resonated strongly in one particular message, overall, the more specific “fishing and boating” was preferred over the more generic “on the water.”

Based on the focus groups, three messages are recommended to communicate the benefits of recreational fishing and boating and aquatic stewardship to lapsed anglers and boaters. Three messages are recommended to be used in various settings that communicate the three most important benefits of recreational fishing and boating: relaxation, the value of recreational fishing and boating in fostering relationships among family and friends, and the aquatic resource stewardship values these activities can foster. Specifically the three messages recommended are:

- **On the water, no cars, no rush hour, no deadline, a chance to relax.**

- **Fishing and boating connects family and friends.**
- **Fishing and boating enhances appreciation for the natural world.**

The first message is a variation on the message that tested highest, “On the water, no cars, no rush hour, no deadline, no choice but to relax. The “no choice” verbiage was changed to “a chance to relax” because of the possible negative reaction to the statement, “no choice.” Americans like choice. In fact, the statement, “Freedom to choose” is often connected to controversial issues to increase the acceptance level of the issue. For example, a much higher percentage of people will agree with the statement, “People should have the freedom to choose to wear fur if they want to,” as compared to the number of people who would support wearing fur. In the focus groups there was some negative reaction to the “no choice” part of the statement. When the message was changed to “On the water, no cars, no rush hour, no deadline, a chance to relax” in Cleveland, it rated the highest message overall. The anomaly was Denver, where this message did not test particularly well. However, based on all of the information, Message 1 is a very strong message.

The second message is a variation of two other messages that tested very high and will be an effective message based on numerous findings from the focus groups. Messages that appealed to fishing and boating with family and friends and the relationships that are fostered while participating in these activities resonated very strongly with most of the lapsed anglers and boaters. The message is also very specific, as compared to other similar messages, something that was quite important to focus group participants. Overall, specificity was favored over generalities. For example, instead of “people,” focus group participants preferred “family and friends,” and in most cases (with the exception of Message 1) preferred “fishing and boating” over “on the water.” “On the water” made some people think of simply being at the beach,

vacation cruises or fishing from a bank, not fishing from a boat or boating in general. Again, rather than communicating that fishing and boating “connects people,” it is preferable to be specific about who the message is referring to. Is it referring to anglers being connected with one another? Boaters? People in general? The second message is successfully worded by clarifying who is connected, specifically, family and friends.

The third message resonated particularly well with focus group participants and is especially important in that it relays the aquatic resource stewardship aspect of recreational boating and fishing, something the focus groups showed was difficult for a message to do. Overall, many messages regarding stewardship issues were not well received or considered believable by focus group participants. This particular message, did, however, and can be used as an important starting point in conveying that recreational fishing and boating are important aspects of aquatic resource stewardship. This message was very believable to most participants from their personal experiences. Others agreed that if one participates in these recreational activities, they are more likely to appreciate the natural world and their surroundings than someone who does not participate. Furthermore, *appreciation* of natural resources was viewed as one aspect of relaxation, a known motivational factor for recreational boating and fishing participation.

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INTRODUCTION

Twenty short, single sentence messages about the benefits of recreational boating and/or fishing were tested with four focus groups in Tampa, Florida, Denver, Colorado and Cleveland, Ohio for the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation. The purpose of the focus groups was to identify a core set of messages that best communicated the benefits of recreational boating, fishing and aquatic stewardship. When creating the twenty test messages, the objectives were that the messages be short, concise, memorable and positive. The messages were developed using many supporting quantitative studies that show what is known about motivations and restraints to recreational boating and fishing. Some messages were intended to communicate the known primary motivations for participation (relaxation, quality time with family and friends, and being outdoors and close to nature) while others were developed to address the primary constraint to participation (time). Other messages were developed to communicate other benefits of participation such as the economic benefit to the community and the development of aquatic stewardship.

Two of the focus groups were conducted in Tampa, one group with inactive anglers and one group with inactive boaters. The other two groups were with mixed inactive anglers and inactive boaters in Denver and Cleveland. These categories were operationally defined as individuals who had taken part in recreational boating and/or fishing in the past 5 years but not the past 12 months. Lapsed anglers were separated from lapsed boaters in Tampa to better understand if different messages resonated more or less with these specific groups. The messages were tested to determine their ability to communicate the various benefits of participating in recreational boating and fishing and whether they would have a positive impact in terms of increasing interest in recreational boating and/or fishing.

The messages were tested in two ways. First, focus group participants were asked to rate the messages on a 1 to 10 Likert scale with one signifying that the statement “does not at all represent my positive thoughts about, and the importance of, recreational fishing and boating,” and ten signifying that the statement, “very much represents my positive thoughts about, and the importance of, recreational fishing and boating.” There was also a category of n/a for “not applicable.” The Likert scale responses for the groups were averaged. The higher the rating, the more the statement represented the focus group participants’ positive thoughts about and the importance of recreational fishing and boating. Following the Likert scale testing, there was a focus group discussion.

A Likert scale test is a type of composite quantitative measurement that is often used as an initial attempt in the separation of variables. While it can stand alone in some cases, it is most often used as the first level of differentiation (Babbie, 1998:166-191). Focus groups are a type of qualitative research that produce results with extremely high content validity on the total range of opinions (Babbie, 1998:248-249) but are not random survey samples. They are extremely useful in the development of an understanding of attitudes, issues and concerns. Focus groups will not yield results that can be replicated to any degree of statistical accuracy. However, focus groups are an important method to test messages because they allow for extensive probing, follow-up questions, group discussion and observation of emotional reaction to various messages, aspects that can’t be measured in a traditional telephone or mail survey. The use of both qualitative methods, such as focus groups, and quantitative methods, such as Likert scales, in a single study is a type of research triangulation and will help to increase both validity and reliability.

The following messages were tested, although not all of the messages were tested in all of the groups:

- *On the water. . .no cars, no rush-hour, no deadline. . .no choice but to relax.*
- *Fishing and boating enhances appreciation for the natural world.*
- *When boating and fishing you get to be part of another world.*
- *Time spent on the water is time well spent.*
- *Time spent on the water connects families and friends.*
- *Time spent on the water connects people.*
- *It is hard not to relax when you are on the water.*
- *It doesn't matter if you catch anything, it's the time spent with family and friends that counts.*
- *Fishing and boating connects families & friends and creates lasting memories.*
- *On the water. . .no cars, no rush-hour, no deadline. . .a chance to relax.*
- *The ideal Sunday is a day on the water creating (lasting) memories.*
- *Fishing and boating are valued family traditions.*
- *Fishing and boating are valued family activities.*
- *I may not catch a fish, but I will catch up with my son/daughter.*
- *Buy a rod, bait and some extra time with your family.*
- *Fishing and boating enhances respect for the natural world.*
- *Fishing and boating supports the communities (places) you (we) cherish.*
- *Fishing and boating help preserve the waters where you first learned how to cast a rod.*
- *Time spent on the water connects you to your heritage and builds your legacy.*
- *Anglers and boaters help preserve the places where you discovered the joy of fishing and boating.*

The focus groups in this study were conducted using standard research methodology for qualitative research. The methodology for these focus groups was formal as described by (Krueger 1988: 59-106; Frey and Fontana, 1994) in that one-way mirrors and unobtrusive observation occurred. For a complete discussion of the uses of focus group research, see (Morgan and Krueger 1997 et seq.). Responsive Management has used these techniques in other studies on wildlife conservation and recreation topics (Bissell and Duda 1993; Bissell and Duda 1995; Duda et al., 1998).

The analysis of these focus groups was an iterative process. The moderator took notes and observations at the time of the focus group. The audiotapes were listened to and the videotapes were viewed in detail. The tapes were reviewed a second time and verbatim transcripts were made. The transcripts were then reviewed and edited for the most relevant comments. The transcripts were sorted into categories and compiled into the draft report and analysis. Excerpted transcripts and the final report and analysis were then prepared. Thus, six reviews of the data were completed in the preparation of this report.

Results from both quantitative and qualitative analyses were used for this report. However, it should be noted that although this report includes “quantified results,” the sample sizes are extremely small and should be used only as an indicator of how the focus group participants initially rated each message. Overall, this report should be viewed as qualitative in nature, even though it includes numerical data.

Comments from the focus groups are included here to demonstrate the degree of acceptance of the messages and some particular issues the focus group participants had with the messages. Comments will appear in *italics* and are verbatim unless noted by [brackets], which indicate paraphrasing for clarity. No attempt has been made to correct grammar unless the

meaning was lost. Omissions are noted by dashes --- and each comment will be coded as to the specific focus group from which it was transcribed. Comments within focus groups may appear together, but comments between groups are always noted. For the anglers in Tampa, Florida, the code is (TA), and for the boaters in Tampa the code is (TB). The mixed groups of both inactive anglers and inactive boaters in Denver, Colorado and Cleveland, Ohio are noted by (DC) and (CO), respectively.

MESSAGES THAT RESONATED STRONGLY AMONG FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

- *On the water. . .no cars, no rush-hour, no deadline. . .no choice but to relax.*

The Likert scale rating on this message was 9.22, highest of all of the messages tested. The only negative response was the idea of having “no choice.” The message was changed to “a chance to relax.” (NOTE: When this message was changed to “a chance to relax” in Denver and Cleveland, it received an average rating of 7.76.) It rated high in Cleveland but not in Denver.

In Tampa this message was met with very high marks. In general, there is a perception that boating, especially, allowed an opportunity to relax.

You are away from the cars, you are away from the traffic, you are away from the everyday work life, you are just out there --- that's it. Nobody is breathing down your neck. There are no cars running up on your butt with their lights on. No one is blowing your horns, no one is trying to run you off the road. (TB)

I like the whole thing. (Moderator: Why is that?) Because I am going to relax. (TA)

In Tampa, some objection to the term “no choice” was noted. The suggestion was that this could be tempered by changing this to “no alternative” or “a chance,” which was tested in Denver and Cleveland.

I don't like that “no choice BUT to relax.” Like you have to.

Well instead of 'choice' how about using the word 'alternative'?

It is still relaxing because it is not something that you have to do. It is something that you choose to do. (TB)

I didn't like the "no choice but to relax" part. That is what you want to do but it does not always work out like that. (TA)

- ***On the water. . .no cars, no rush-hour, no deadline. . .a chance to relax.***

In Denver there was some perception that this message pertained primarily to boating and that it was not entirely believable. In fact, this message provoked considerable discussion and a wide range of reactions in Denver.

I see [the statement as] "on the water, as being on a boat." The last time I was on a boat, it was pretty noisy and stressful and a lot of boats speeding by. I think that it is not always relaxing, and it depends on where you are at and the people that are also out boating with you. I think it would be more reflective of fishing.

Actually, originally I gave it a two. I sympathize with what the previous person said but most of the times that I am on the water, it is in the early morning and the water isn't that crowded. Just the way I approach it, which allows me to not deal with those hassles and headaches.

I gave it a one. I can change it to an eight, because if you are into fishing and boating, and you are there, that it is great. In that aspect, I gave it an eight. But for me, because I haven't done it in so long. It reminded me of being there and fishing and having no stress.

I gave it a nine. I actually would give it lower now because I was thinking more of a belly boat or a paddleboat. And that is a chance to relax. But if you are in a motorboat and you are having to look out for everybody else, than that is not relaxing to me either.

I gave it a seven. I was going to go a little low on it because I don't really get worried about rush hour. Every once in a while, but with my job, and I am young so that stuff doesn't really bother me. When you are on the water, you do tend to relax more so that is why I gave it that rating.

I gave it an eight. I tend to not worry about rush-hour or deadlines so I don't really give it too much. I do think it is a relaxing activity, so I gave it an eight.

Even though I gave the statement a ten, I gave it a ten in spirit. The statement itself and the comment about rush hour is kind of redundant and I have a thing about redundant advertising. 'On the water, a chance to relax' to me doesn't necessarily have to be on a boat. You can be on the shore. My focus is the lake or the stream. The total statement is not 100% believable. (DC)

The focus group in Cleveland had a lot of discussion about the meaning of the word "relax" including some interesting observations emphasizing that some types of activities on the water considered relaxing to some, may not be to others.

I gave it an eight. I like to go jet skiing and I get on the water and I can go as fast as I want and there is no one around. (CO)

Others in the Cleveland group were consistent in thinking that time on the water, whether fishing or boating alone, or both, could be relaxing.

*I rated it a nine because I related it to sailing because I used to sail.
I gave it an eight. When you say that you give me a chance to escape. Probably boating I think.*

*I gave it a ten because you need to get away from everything.
I gave that one a ten because for me it gives me a chance to relax.
I rated it a six. I think that when you are close to the water you are relaxed and it's quiet. Boating, because it is ON the water. To me it would be boating because I'm not thinking about catching a fish.*

Definitely a ten. I think about boating and fishing. (CO)

In the Cleveland group, as in the other groups, there was also the observation that time on the water was not necessarily relaxing and could, in fact, be the opposite at times.

I dropped it from about a ten to a seven because there are areas that you can't go and relax. Take Lake Erie, you're not going to relax [out there]. Those guys up there with those jet ski boats [make it hard to relax].

I guess I can relate to that, too, because when we try to go up there and there is not too much traffic, you can enjoy a peaceful day of fishing up there [but otherwise, it is not relaxing]. (CO)

- ***Fishing and boating enhances appreciation for the natural world.***

This message was the second highest rated message with a score of 8.33. There was a lot of discussion about the use of the word “appreciation” as opposed to the use of the word “respect.” However, the Likert scale rating dropped when wording was changed from “appreciation” to “respect” due to the many negative comments made during one particular focus group.

Both boaters and anglers in Tampa were very supportive of this message. Both groups mentioned aspects of boating and angling, such as wildlife viewing, which “enhanced appreciation.”

You don't know what you're going to see out there. You could see dolphins. You see all kinds of natural things of the sea, and it is beautiful. If you look over the side of the boat and the water is really clear, you can see so far down. It is amazing the things that you see.

...I don't want to just go out there and trash it. I want there to be some respect and balance. When you go out there and you do it for sport and relaxation, you learn to respect and appreciate it.

There are people who go out and they just want to get their boat wet for five or ten minutes and then bring it back. That doesn't give them enough time to appreciate what's out there. But, if you go out there for hours at a time and you start cruising along these waterways and back streams you get an opportunity to see an environment where all these fish live in. That is where the real appreciation comes from. You get to see the animals in their natural habitat instead of just going out there for 30 minutes and saying "Oh well, I didn't catch anything," and then go on back. (TB)

I think one of the best things that I have ever seen was with my family on a boat and we riding up the coast on the gulf and we saw a dolphin with a baby and the water was really clear and we followed it, but it was really amazing to see that in the wild.

It all makes you appreciate calm.

There are a lot of things where the working people get involved with the every day things of life, and when you get stressed you take it for granted, and you see things like a bird diving into the water and picking up a fish and taking it up into a tree to eat it. It can be enjoyable to see things that you've never seen before. I appreciate the natural world.

Sometimes it can be not so relaxing and natural. (TA)

Interestingly, the Denver group of mixed inactive anglers and inactive boaters disagreed sharply on this message. Part of the group found the message strongly unbelievable because they felt both anglers and boaters were not appreciative of the natural world, and the other group felt the message accurately described their impressions about angling and boating.

I gave it a two, which means I [disagree] with it strongly, and actually I'll use this one to kinda make a statement about all of these questions that I found. I found that the questions are reflective of -- one portion, they are reflective of what you think both these activities should be versus the reality of them. And that is kinda what I found so...I went through them all in what I found to be the reality. Ideally, I feel that fishing and boating are activities that should enhance appreciation of or for the natural world, however, I find that quite often they don't, and the people who practice both these things actually have quite a disrespect, unfortunately, for these things.

I gave it a ten. Not to disagree with you. I like this statement. There are five people in our family and my sister has a cabin up at Mount Massive, and so the lake is 50 feet in front of the cabin and the fish are like this big [shows size with hands], literally, and we just bought a 27 foot camper trailer just this past weekend just to get out and do more fishing everywhere else. But, it does. For our family it enhances the appreciation because we are very courteous of going

in and leaving things either better or the same way as we found them, and that is what we are teaching our kids.

I gave it a 10. One of my favorite lakes to fish at is only about 10 or 15 feet deep and you can go on these little bull rushes, and we go bass fishing up in Minnesota quite frequently. To be able to just sit there and just look down at the lake and see the bottom and see the life that goes on under there and have the time to actually watch it.

Uhhh. Well, I go back to a very similar situation. My family has a place, but it is back East actually, it is up in Canada on the Saint Lawrence River, which is a fairly high use area for both recreational boating and fishing. And I find that a number of people do have that respect for the environment; but, unfortunately, I find that a lot of people who do not live there do not. I think that is the big difference.

I think you always have the people that don't respect the environment. We have had that for years. Hopefully, there is less than there was 20 years ago, 30 years ago. But I think anytime you are out in there, in the environment. Most people have a better enhancement or better feeling about it. It is easy for someone to relate, 'Oh yea, we need to protect that' if they go out and see it. It is hard for you to convince person "A," say in New York City that doesn't ever go out into that environment to say we need to protect it. If they never go out there...

Well, I live in kinda a technical world at work and so when I can get out of it... for me this statement works for me. I mean. I can see how fishing and boating some people can abuse the environment. To us we just give more respect when we go out in it. We are always really careful about what we do. For me, it works.

I guess it is true like XX said cause you know... Yea, sometimes my friends will say yea, let's go fishing and you don't know maybe not want to, but then when you are out there it is a lot different. It makes you think, think different about it once you are really out there and doing something like that. Yea, it does make you appreciate nature more. (DC)

The Cleveland focus group showed sharp differences in their reaction to this message, but not for reasons about the term "appreciation" versus "respect." In this group there was actual disagreement about whether or not the message reflected the truth.

[That is a] ten. Just the idea – I appreciate the natural world, the water, fishing, the environment out there, not being around cars.

I give it an eight. When you're out there in the wilderness without the cars, people rushing back and forth – just the nice countryside.

I give it a five. It gets boring out there.

I give it a four. Boating is fun, but it's not the ultimate.

I give it a five. It has its good times and its bad times. I wouldn't look to boating or fishing anytime I wanted to do something outdoors. Like he was saying, maybe go hunting or something like that.

I give it a nine. That gives me a reason to go out into the natural world. (CO)

- ***Fishing and boating enhances respect for the natural world.*** (tested in Denver and Cleveland)

I gave it a seven and I was thinking the same way she was. Just because you are in a boat doesn't mean you have respect.

...I rated it an 8, which is lower than the appreciation [statement]. I think with appreciate, after you appreciate, then you can really respect something. I think it is hard to respect something if you don't really appreciate its value. I don't know. I guess I've been around a lot of people that have really appreciated and respected the environment. (DC)

I gave it a six because you are either going to respect something or you are not. I know a lot of boaters and fisherman and their cans go overboard, their cigarettes go overboard. Just because they are fishing and boating doesn't mean respect.

I gave it a five. Same as the other one. I like it but I am not gung-ho on fishing and boating, but I appreciate everything there is for fishing and boating. I like to be outdoors, too.

I gave it a seven and I was thinking the same way she was. Just because you are in a boat doesn't mean you have respect. (CO)

- ***When boating and fishing you get to be part of another world.***

This message also scored high, with a rating of 8.30. Both boaters and anglers agreed that this was a major benefit and value in boating and fishing. The negative aspects were that boating and fishing really weren't part of "another world." However, this message played well because of its universal appeal, perhaps due to its openness to personalized interpretations. Some people saw being in "another world" for its naturalistic values, while others interpreted being in "another world" as an escape from the every day pressures of life.

Tampa boaters were likely to agree with this message in terms of relaxation and being able to do things for relaxation. Boaters, it should be noted, were seldom exclusive; they often were anglers as well.

I just want to say one thing. For me, it is like creating your own space. I guess it is really a mind thing. Some people will go out and not really enjoy themselves. They will complain about the sun if it is summertime, and they will complain that it is too windy. But for other people it is just the opposite. It is really what you create in your own mind.

I don't really think that it is escape from or escape to because when we go out, we got phones and TVs and radios and GPS and we are not going to get away, we're going to get fish.

We're not escaping anything. I get on my friends 44 [foot boat] and I say, "Where are you guys at, how are the waves?"

I gave it an eight or a nine because it is believable and it is another world as far as demographics. You're on the water as opposed to being on the land. It is not an escape to me at all...Yea, I have a goal, I have a reason, I'm going to fish.

I liked what he said about it not being another world, it's enjoying this world. That kind of brought me back down; you're right. But, my world tends to be more tense, both with my job and the TV and things going on, the neighborhood. But when I get out on the boat, to me it is my other world so that is why I gave it a ten. It's a wonderful thing to do. (Moderator: It's almost like your escape then.) Oh yes it is.

I think it is another world because you are away from telephones and television and noise so I would say that it is another world out there and it is both. You are leaving and you're going to. You are leaving the world behind and going on to something better. (TB)

Tampa anglers also agreed with the message and took it to mean just fishing, not necessarily fishing from a boat. Anglers focused on the relaxation aspect of this message.

For me, when I was [working] I would go out on the boat and sip a beer just to get into that other world. When I'm out there in the other world, it is open and different, and I'm not closed in.

There is no laundry and driving people all over the place.

I just feel like I have been set free from everything and everyone.

You're never going to go out and say, "Oh, I need to be back by three." When you go, you go and it is just time that you have carved out [for] relaxation.

I agree with it. I think that you are definitely somewhere else when you are out there. (TA)

The group in Denver gave this message a mixed response. Those who liked it felt that it reflected their views about boating and fishing.

It's like an escape or mini-vacation. Whenever you get out and spend time in nature, you forget your hectic personal life and leave your worries behind, and you are part of another world. . . . Oh yea, not so much in the boating and fishing but I go out hiking quite often. And whenever I get out and climb around on the rocks, it's an escape, and you can get out and enjoy the great outdoors and be in a different world.

I agree. I gave it a nine. I think of it and it's different sights and sounds and smells and it's a whole different place than being in the city. I don't fish in the city, so it makes a big difference.

I give it a nine. Three summers ago, I put a tarp over the powerboat and didn't renew the license and bought a canoe. So that has been another road for us because we have the four-wheel drive; and, we go out to the ponds and there are no powerboats. To us, it is a different world now. It takes me away from everything concrete. (DC)

The Cleveland focus group produced a mixed but overall positive response to this message. There was some negative response; some expressed the feeling that the message was an exaggeration.

I think that if you fish a lot it's kind of normal to you, so, it would be part of your world. If you don't fish a lot then it might seem like it's part of another world; it might be more different to some people than to other people.

I gave it a five because to me that is no different than going hiking or skiing or any other [activity].

I gave it a six. (Moderator: You're kind of neutral; how come?) Well, I like the crazy world.

To me, at that time I could relate to a lot of things that went on. You could go boating or fishing or boating and fishing. I know I went with my family a couple of times canoeing. You just get taken away from loud noises, and you get tranquility. For me, at the time, it was a priority. It seems like it took me away from the real world with the noise and the viciousness and stuff out there.

I gave it a four. Thinking it over right now, I think that I would give it a higher number. I would give it a seven. If you are going boating and fishing, you do get your mind off of other things, and you get to belong to a different part of the world. (CO)

- ***Time spent on the water is time well spent.***

This message tested well in all groups. The overall Likert scale score was 8.08.

However, there was some reservation expressed about the concept that “time on the water was *always* well spent.” Not catching any fish, crowding and boating mishaps could all change that perception, and many participants were aware of these factors.

The reactions to this message were mostly positive. Tampa boaters were likely to see the message as another example of a relaxation opportunity.

To me it is very relaxing number one. Number two like I said, I can be with my daughter or son-in-law or granddaughter. It is time spent with the family so I enjoy that.

I want to say almost the same thing. It is time spent with the grandkids. I didn't spend a lot of time with them because of school, work, and that type of thing so it is time well spent.

Basically, time spent with relatives you consider fun is time well spent. There is not too many opportunities that you can do that so—

Absolutely, it gives you piece of mind when you get out there. It is relaxing.

I always felt relaxed.

Right, you can forget about everything.

I rated it high; I don't remember whether it was a nine or a ten. The reason I did that is because [boating] gives me serenity. Sometimes you have a bad week at work. If you had a bad week at work, or whatever the situation might be, once you get in that water and throw your pole in the water and just sit there. It's like you're in another world so it was very well spent time.

I gave it about a six or a seven. As far as time on the water being well spent or not, if I am fishing but I'm not catching anything I don't consider it lost time, but I don't think about it as tranquil, I'm there to fish. If not it's take it or leave it.

I think I gave it a seven or an eight. When you're out there you really don't care about time that much. When you make the statement about time itself it just felt kind of funny to me. I don't really concern myself with time. Of course you know what time it is but you really don't concern yourself with time. Time is no question. (TB)

Tampa anglers were also likely to respond positively to this message. However, it should be noted that they might interpret this message to mean bank fishing and not fishing from a boat.

I think that I gave this one a ten. . . .Because I think that time spent on the water is time well spent. . . .Well, it just states it; it is a fact. Because it is so relaxing to forget everything else. That is time well spent.

Saltwater and the breeze is very relaxing to the body and your family is doing the same thing. Like a lot of us Americans, we have stressful lives. We're constantly on the go. . .I gave it a ten.

I think I put an eight on that. Sometimes you can just go out in the middle of the night and, depending on the tide, that is the best time to go fishing. . . It can be time well spent or you could just be out there.

I gave it a ten also because I feel that time on the water is so much less expensive than going to a psychiatrist. It does me a world of good; I just wish that I had more time. I think the word recreational ought to be out there somewhere because you can't make any money from it. If you have free time then that is recreational time and then it is time well spent; but it is not productive time unless you are catching fish.

I gave it a ten. Because it doesn't have to be productive, but when I pack up my stuff and I go out there, no matter what kind of day it is I always feel rejuvenated. The only time I would not think that it was time well spent would be if I was out on the boat in a storm. On the water to me doesn't necessarily mean that you are on the boat or are fishing, you could be on the beach. Your problems just go away for a little bit and it lets you know that you are a small part of a big universe.

I gave it a five. Because that is what you hope for but it doesn't always turn out like that. Like I said, if your boat breaks down or I remember one time where my kid got sunburn, sometimes you go and it isn't fun.

I would have to agree because I remember a few years ago that we took out our boat and the boat broke down and it was really rough. It is not always pleasurable. (TA)

Negative responses to this message seemed to be directed at the idea of “time.” In the Denver focus group, a young participant observed that she enjoyed her time fishing and boating, but that it might have been spent on other activities as well.

As a busy mom, this statement frustrates me. It's not well-spent. I have laundry, bills to pay and dinner to make. I have a lot of other things on my plate that are going on. Plus, packing for the camping trip, cooking for the camping trip and changing muddy clothes on the camping trip. It's not necessarily well-spent. I gave it a nine, but I am going to knock it down to a five. It's one of those questions that I kept going back to and it kept eating away at me. If my family wanted to do it every single weekend, I would have a problem with that.

I gave it a five. It just depends. If it is relaxing and not too crowded, then it is time well-spent. If it's noisy and there are too many people around, I feel like I wasted my time. I haven't relaxed.

Not for me personally. It's kind of a negative statement for me. It's just the well-spent part. Time on the water is nice, but I have other things going on and things I want to do. I am taking care of everybody else still.

I gave it a three. I am back to the thing where since I am not an active fisherman, it's not really an important thing. But it is better than sitting at home watching TV all weekend. (DC)

- ***Time spent on the water connects families and friends.***

This message tested well in all groups. It received an overall Likert rating of 7.93. The message tested very highly with those who boated and/or fished with family and friends and less so with those who did not.

Tampa boaters were likely to rate this high if they did boat with family and friends or if they observed others doing so.

I think that it is a true statement. There's no electricity, no TV, we don't have the radio going. It's either silent or you're talking with your family so there is no distractions, and the only distraction would be catching a fish; and, that is a joyful moment, and everybody shares in it. It is definitely a ten when I go out on the boat.

[I like] the way that it is worded. It brings in families and friends.

You don't see one person riding around in a boat. Most of the time they are full with families or friends or someone. (TB)

On the other hand, some Tampa boaters did not boat with family and friends and they were less likely to agree with this message. These individuals were more likely to see boating as an activity they did for themselves, or for its own sake, not for other values.

I did not rate that as high as the other one [because] when I think about boating, I think about sunshine, warm weather and fresh air; and, family and friends kind of come with it, but I'm sure that the connection with family and friends is probably not the reason I go boating.

Well, I don't see where just time spent on the water connects families and friends. Anything that you're doing with them connects families and friends; it's not just the water. I don't like that statement. (TB)

Tampa anglers supported the essence of this statement.

I gave it an eight. Because time spent on the water could connect you to friends and family but not always.

I don't remember what it was but it was a higher score but I never had any problems because we always took our kids with us and we took friends and their kids and we always connected.

I think that it could connect you to people regardless but it doesn't say anything about fishing or boating. (TA)

The reaction from the Cleveland group was more neutral than positive. They did not see this as an especially important concept, but did agree with the message and gave it a relatively high rating.

Yea, I mean, you have to connect with people. You're sharing the same experience. You're in a limited space, unless you're going to fall asleep, you're going to connect with somebody.

I gave it an eight. There is not much else to do other than to talk and, you pretty much have to connect.

I gave it a four. It does do that, but it didn't do that for me. We didn't have a lot of water around us, but I could see how it could do that.

I gave it a ten. (A ten? So this really provoked a response in you.) Like I said it brings my family together when we get on the boat and go fishing. The whole family went out for the whole weekend. We would just connect and get away from our problems.

I gave it an eight. It seems a little bit more specific than "time spent on the water connects people." It kind of breaks it down to family and friends. The wording makes it— (Moderator: So you think this is better worded?) Yeah, I think that it brings back memories instead of just saying "people." It is more personal. (CO)

The Denver focus group participants reacted positively to the message, especially in terms of the message evoking memories of fishing with family.

Well, personally I was introduced to [fishing] at a very young age by my father and grandfather. I just know all that time you spent with them out there one-on-one with them, I don't know how you couldn't connect to them.

I agree with what he just said. Quite often these are two activities that are passed down through generations within a family. You're out there on the water, it's two or three of you in a boat, and you got to connect or if you don't it could be a real lousy time. But, it definitely creates an environment where conversation and communication naturally flow.

Even when we are off the water, my brother-in-law goes fishing real early in the morning, and I like to fish in the evening. We bring in our different fish stories. So, it connects us even if we are on the water alone. For if we are in a boat and we are all by ourselves, we still have those fish stories. (DC)

One member of the Denver focus group communicated that boating and fishing were not activities he especially liked to share. This message did not reflect reality to him as he did not always boat or fish with family or friends.

For me, it is kinda ying-yang, personally. Sometimes it does, and sometimes it is a solitude thing. It kinda depends there. Yea, if I have a chance to go fishing with, like, an old buddy that I haven't seen in a while, you're going to have eight hours; you've got a pretty good chance of connecting and catching up on stuff you might not remember to talk about over just a cup of coffee. But, sometimes I just like to get out there alone also. You know, sometimes my wife and I might go fishing together, but then when we get to the lake [we separate]. We might be connected, but we are alone. I gave it an eight because it isn't a real solid statement to me. (DC)

- ***Time spent on the water connects people.***

This message received a 7.90 rating and was well received in most groups. The negative aspects of this message were that if people were “connected,” they would not need the water to help that aspect of their lives. There was some confusion about what “time on the water” meant. Some anglers did not like boating and so, “time on the water” was not as appealing to them.

The reaction to this message followed the same lines as the message, “Time spent on the water connects families and friends.” On the one hand there is the observation that being in a

boat with people makes “connections” more or less mandatory. However, this sort of “connection” may or may not be a positive experience. In general, however, this message was interpreted as positive.

The Denver focus group responded favorably to this message. In this group there was the observation that the message itself could be interpreted based on individual preferences.

Yea, I can't think of any time when I [went] boating or fishing when it has been a bad time. I only associate good times with it. I guess I could think real hard about when I was arguing about something somewhere. But, not right off the bat, I can't. It was a good family time, friend time.

I like the statement very much because it does [mean something]. I think it is kind of open-ended in that if someone---who likes to spend most of her time alone on the water---that's fine. It's not disparaging of someone who does that, whereas it's speaking to people who spend time together. It speaks positively to it. It depends...I am like her at times, too. It depends on what I am fishing for. If I'm stream fishing, I'll probably go to do it myself. If I'm back East bass fishing, I'm going to be with someone else in the boat. So, for those times when I am out on the water with other people, it speaks positively to it.

I think it communicates, any time spent to gather or connect, it is like quality time. It is good, generally, unless you spill someone else out of the boat or something. I think in most cases, well, its quality time.

I don't know. I guess time spent together is a good thing for a lot of people especially in today's society because a lot of families don't spend a lot of time together. Both spouses are working and the kids kind of get left in front of the TV. There is a whole lot more out there.

I gave it a one, because every time I go fishing and boating. I am with people who I am already connected with – my big brother. I guess there isn't any more connecting to be done. So I gave it a one. (DC)

In the Cleveland group the message met with mixed to neutral response. In this group there was also the interesting interpretation of “on the water” as a “dinner boat” or “cruise,” which demonstrates that audiences do not always hear “recreational boating and/or fishing” when they hear “on the water.”

If you don't want to connect, you might as well jump overboard.

When I started to read it—I like to fish, but I like to do it from the shore because I will not go on a boat.

I don't think it connects you anymore than anything else does. It's a good tool.

I rate it as a three because I took it as time spent on the water connects people. When I am on the water, I am by myself or with one other person. So, that's why I don't understand.

I am with them; if you are out there with someone, then you are going to bond regardless of what is happening. Whether you continue to bond after boating is a different thing.

When I am on a cruise or something, I bond with people. If you go on the Nautica Queen, which is a dinner boat, even there I am not making friends. (CO)

In the focus group, Tampa boaters were slightly critical of this message, although they rated it high in the pre-survey. The primary reason for the participants being critical seems to be that the idea of connecting to someone else is independent of boating and/or fishing. Another observation in Tampa was that some people were unlikely to go on the water, in the first place, with anyone they were not already connected with.

I rated it low because I didn't get that people connection out of it. . .No, I rated them both kind of low because I didn't really get that connection out of it. I internalize more with how it effects me than how it effects someone else. . .I think that I gave it a five or a four or something like that.

I think I have it a two. . .It's not believable because if I'm not connected to the people, I'm not going on the water with them. It's not going to build a relationship; you have to have a relationship for someone to invite you on their boat anyway, if you don't own one. If it's a family member you have to have a close connection there, too, because certain family members don't get along with other family members. So, I'm not going to go on the water with someone that I'm not connected to.

...it doesn't necessarily mean that it connects people to people. You can connect to yourself mentally by being relaxing and tranquil.

There is definitely camaraderie there. It's like riding a motorcycle, everyone else that is out there riding a motorcycle waves at you. There is that common interest in a thing, so it does connect you. (TB)

Tampa anglers were slightly more positive, but also observed that the idea of connection in this message was independent from the activity.

I don't necessarily agree or disagree with this statement. It doesn't really affect me that much . . .I think that it all depends on who you are with and the situation.

I think that it not only connects you to people that you are with, but there is also respect out there with fellow boaters. It is a connection in itself and not necessarily with the people that you are with. There is a connection with boaters.

I think that it is an absolutely true statement, that it connects boaters; but, whether it connects them positively or negatively is a different thing. I think that it has a lot to do with the fact that you are in an environment where you are in the water and you meet people. I have met with some business people when just sitting out there and talking. You know that everyone doesn't go out on the boat to go fishing. When you go out on the pier and someone

catches a big fish, you just connect and you talk. It doesn't have to be boating; you can connect with people when you are on the water. (TA)

- ***It is hard not to relax when you are on the water.***

The Likert rating for this message was 7.88. Some focus group participants observed that relaxation on the water was relative. If you enjoy boating, then boating could be relaxing. If you do not enjoy boating, then it would not be relaxing. It was also noted that sometimes boating was just plain hard work.

This message probably received high marks on the Likert tests because it is very neutral. In the focus groups, it did not provoke a lot of positive or negative comments. It was difficult to use this message to engage the groups in discussion. In fact, it was found that some focus group participants rated the message high on the Likert test, but really did not like it or vice versa. It was also noted that this message was confusing because of the wording of "hard not to relax."

Seven. To me fishing is very relaxing.

It is an easy way to relax.

Seven because it all depends on where you're at. Like I said, down at Lake Erie, you don't relax out there. You can relax, but there are other times you get a little apprehensive.

I rated it an eight because I have never been seasick before, and I like the rocking of the boat, like it could rock me to sleep.

I gave it a five because you're right, it is relaxing. (CO)

Water is a soothing sound and is very nice.

It makes me think of summer.

It makes me feel good inside.

I don't like the way it is worded. I would prefer, 'It's easy to relax when you are on the water.'

I am like him. When I see water, you can be skipping stones on the pond, speed boating, whatever.

When I first read it, I took it as you don't relax on the water or [as] a double negative. (DC)

Just being around water is relaxing.

I was just going to say that it would be better if it said, "It is hard not to relax once you're on the water." Of course, that is probably the same thing.

That last one wasn't too bad. I like that one; it kind of sums it all up.

Relaxing and being with people; there are some nice people here, and they are all fisherman.

The relaxation part. The one thing that wasn't in there that I thought would be and that is a sense of freedom.

Exploring. We have a small boat, and it is nice to go around and get into all those little crooks and areas that you can get into and just float and fish. (TB)

MESSAGES THAT RESONATED MODERATELY WELL AMONG FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

- *It doesn't matter if you catch anything, it's the time spent with family and friends that counts.*

This message scored toward the middle on the rankings of all of the messages, with a score of 7.85. Although catching a fish is not a primary motivation for many anglers, catching fish does matter. In the message, directly pointing out that catching fish doesn't matter, takes away from the effectiveness of this message. Of those who fished with children, it was observed that it would be more important for the children to catch something.

This message is seen as believable by all groups, but it has a moderate downfall because catching fish is important for both anglers and family in general. The issue for participants was not whether or not catching fish was important; it was whether or not it was the most important consideration. In all cases, it was not the most important consideration. In fact, in several of the groups the participants stated they would *not* prefer a day out by themselves *catching* fish as opposed to a day with family and friends not catching fish.

Obviously, for those who fish alone, this message has little salience. Also, boaters were either impressed with or neutral towards this message. In Cleveland, there was a mix of positive and negative responses to this message.

I gave it a ten. To me, it seems like family and friends are taking the time out to go out there to begin with. You're going to have well spent time that counts. If I didn't want to spend time with my friends, I wouldn't invite them.

I think that the time spent with them counts; but, it said that it doesn't matter if you don't catch anything and it does matter.

I think that it is the only one that I rated as a ten.

I gave that one a ten, too. To me, it doesn't matter if you catch anything, it's just the time that you spend with your family and friends.

It matters.

Nothing is as frustrating as going out for seven or eight hours and you don't catch anything.

I kind of agree with him. If you're a dedicated fisherman, it does matter. Then again, it's like an excuse that if you don't catch anything, "Well hey, at least I got to spend time with my buddies." (CO)

The Denver focus group produced some of the sharpest divergence on this message.

Individuals with small children were most impressed with this message and those without children or who did not boat or fish with friends were unimpressed.

That is the importance of recreational fishing and boating. I gave it a ten, and I would give it a higher rating if you had it. That is what is important.

I gave it a nine. Being with family and friends is important. But, then I have been with my husband when he didn't catch anything and gets so [angry].

I agree with her, in the sense of, if it was a day trip and you didn't catch anything; it wouldn't really matter if I caught anything for that day. If it was the next, I'd be a little unhappy.

Take me, for instance, I spent all of my money going to Alaska, and I think I would have had a good time with my brother and friend; but, if I wouldn't have caught a fish, I would have been a little bit uneasy.

I gave it an eight too for the same reason. You are out there for fishing. If you go out once or twice and don't catch a fish that's fine. I don't think you want to go out there all summer and not catch one fish. That's why I didn't give it a ten.

I think the experience with your family and friends is really what makes it an experience.

I think when you go fishing with your kids, if they never catch anything, they don't want to go fishing anymore. I think they would rather do something else. (DC)

The Tampa inactive angler focus group participants also expressed the idea that catching fish, in some situations, was more important than in others.

I think that I had a nine or a ten. Whether I catch a fish or not is not important with me; it is the time spent with my family that is important. We picnic, have a great time and really enjoy it.

I think that it is a great theory. You can have a good time out there but eventually you do want to catch fish, especially with the kids.

Well, it is your mind set when you go. If you are there to spend time with family and friends and fishing is incidental, it is one thing; if you are going to fish, you are wanting to catch fish.

If you are going deep-sea fishing or are chartering a boat, you better catch a fish. If I am paying \$600 to go out on a boat then I want to catch a fish. I will not relax because I have to write a check. (TA)

Interestingly, the Tampa inactive boater focus group participants were more positive toward this idea.

It doesn't matter what you catch, it is the quality time spent with your family having fun and fishing; that's what counts. If I don't catch anything, it is rewarding to spend time with your friends.

You talked about connecting earlier, and it is a matter of just connecting with nature and being out together.

I feel the same way.

It is a really true statement.

I would give it nine. It's like a lot of things, you take the family out of it, and when you take the family out of it, you take the kids out of it. I think that when I was a kid trying to fish I got bit by mosquitoes, and I wanted to hit the fish in the head with the hammer, and I didn't appreciate it. As I grew older I tended to go with adult friends and family, and they appreciate it, like you would, instead of pushing it on a little kid or family. Fishing now used to traditionally be a family thing because that is the way people used to eat, but now I look at it like adult family because I think that I have had to learn how to appreciate it [fishing with family]. . I don't think they [kids] would learn that [family values] through fishing and boating---to offset what they do in their life. I don't think you learn that by actually boating and fishing. I think you learn it by actually trying to get away from that.

I think that it kind of goes in a cycle because my husband and I talk about the grandkids, even though we don't have any. Right now where we are at, the [stage where the] kids are grown and just starting to enjoy spending time with us; and, we are thinking that as they have children they will want to come over and spend time with us. First of all, there will be something more to do, hopefully. So, it is kind of like a cycle. (TB)

- ***Fishing and boating connects families & friends and creates lasting memories.*** (tested in Denver and Cleveland)

This message, like the previous one, was also rated in the middle range, 7.82 on the Likert scale. In all of the focus groups the message was well received by those who fished or

boated with family and friends and much less well received by those who did not. All groups observed that not all “memories” were positive.

As with other messages using wording associated with family and friends, the primary reason this message fell in ratings is because some of the focus group members did not fish or boat with family and friends, not because they disagreed with the message.

The only reason why I didn't give it a ten is because I only have one friend that I go fishing with anymore. My family doesn't go that much anymore, my son doesn't like to fish. Oh yes, and that is why I gave it an eight. As far as the connecting part goes, that is why I didn't give it a ten.

I gave it an eight. For me it does connect friends and family.

I gave it a five because more than half of my experiences have been business related.

I gave it a nine. Everyone can look back and remember the first time they went boating or the first time they fished.

Same thing, I gave it a ten. I can remember the time where my dad took me, my brother, and my mother to Sugar Island to go fishing. She got to be a pro out there. (Moderator: Now where was that, Lake Erie?) No, that was around upper Michigan, around Canada. That was a memory that stays with me and my parents are still alive, they're in their nineties. They still reflect on that. Like I said, I come from a fishing family.

I gave it a ten because like I said before, good or bad you're going to remember it.

I like the “lasting memories” because people want to do things with their family or friends that they're going to remember. I know me, personally, I remember probably every boating excursion that I ever went on because there was always some incident. (CO)

Individuals who no longer boated or fished with family were asked if boating and fishing created significant memories, and they responded that those activities did.

The lasting memories that was created when I was growing up and as much as we are doing it in my family now, it is a very positive thing for me.

I would have to say creating lasting memories. My grandfather is gone now, and I still treasure the time that we had together.

Ten. That's what I am hoping for. That my kids will look back and have fun, even if it was a disastrous trip.

Especially fishing, as I said, I grew up fishing with my brothers, dad, granddad and uncles. That's what it was about. It wasn't about just going out and catching a fish or being on the water. It was about family time.

I like it because I think it is true and my last few memories have been good. (DC)

- ***The ideal Sunday is a day on the water creating (lasting) memories.*** (tested in Tampa)

This message ranked in the middle range, with a 7.59 on the Likert scale. It received a mixed response from the groups. In some groups it was mentioned that Sunday was the worst day to go fishing because of crowding or church obligations. In other groups there was confusion about “creating” memories.

*I don't like the day attached to it.
If it said “weekends,” then maybe.
Some people can't wait until Sunday.
No, the ideal Sunday is going to church.
I love the Sunday fishing. I would skip out of church on Sunday and go fishing. (TA)*

The idea that a day on the water, interpreted as either fishing or boating, was “ideal” was not generally accepted. This message was seen as a bit of an over statement, which probably accounts for its lower rating.

On the weekend everybody is out there and the boat ramps are full and I think that Saturdays and Sundays are bad days.

I may have given it an eight or a nine; I really don't remember. I don't think I had any low ones. Again, I liked that one because I get to go out with my grandkids; and, kids do and say such funny things, and there would be many, many memories. . .Right, we could only go out on a Saturday or a Sunday because we worked all week. . .Well, I don't know because, like I said, when you have grandkids in ten years I can look back and say, “Do you remember when we did this?” They're going to say, “Yea, wasn't that fun?” There will be many memories that I will have. . .Yes, Sunday, that doesn't matter because we all worked.

I just think that it should say, “Creating the ideal memory is a day spent out on the water.” Because any day would be that.

Yea, I'm not really into boating all that much. So, for me, an ideal Sunday is a day spent out on the golf course. What I mean is that boating is not that high on my priorities. My wife might be the opposite. She would like to be on the boat. I would rather be out on vacation on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday because there is hardly anybody out there, and it is kind of peaceful, and I can't get in trouble. Yea, I like that. Like I said, I don't know all of the rules, and that makes it not an ideal experience for me. (TB)

- ***Fishing and boating are valued family traditions (activities).***

This message tested relatively low in the rankings of all of the messages. The reason for the low rating was that boating, and to some extent fishing, was not really seen as a “family”

tradition. Also, “tradition” was considered too strong a word. The statement was changed to “*Fishing and boating are valued family activities,*” in the Denver and Cleveland groups. The term “activity” was less acceptable overall, when tested in Denver and Cleveland, although the ratings for the statement were not consistent.

*I gave it a five. It is a valued activity for me, but not so much for my son or wife.
(Moderator: Do you take your kids fishing?) No, they are more geared towards the city.
I rated it as a six because I like it, but it's hard to drag them out, it's more of an inconvenience.
(CO)*

I think when I read the 'fishing and boating are valued family activities,' it's a value to me as an adult; my kids probably don't think it's a value.

I gave it an eight. I spend a lot of time fishing with family.

I gave it a one. I never go out with my family fishing. (DC)

I think a tradition is something that you do year after year after year so I believe that some families do have a fishing and boating tradition. I don't think that there are that many families that have a tradition.

Unless you are sailors or something.

A tradition would be like every year you go to Lake Erie or whatever, and that is the tradition. So, that seems more about creating a lasting memory than it would tradition.

Yea, replace tradition with memories and you've got a good—.

I think of tradition that is something of a ritual that you always do a certain way. (TB)

...it is not a tradition. To me a tradition is something that continues on, it is something that the past family members have done and you have done and future generations will do. That is not always the case. My parents were never real big on boating or fishing and things like that, but I am. (So it doesn't ring true for you.) No, and my daughter is not real big on fishing and boating like we are. It just depends on the individual and what they like. (TA)

The reaction to the term “tradition” is probably the key to the relatively low rating.

Fishing and boating are seen as recreational activities and relating them to a strong word, such as “tradition,” will probably not be generally acceptable. There were, however, some focus group participants who accepted this concept.

I actually rated it high. Again, I felt like there are a lot of families where [fishing] is a tradition in their family.

I think I gave it a ten. But, you have to look at a regular boater. If you didn't grow up with your family boating, I think that you would have to look at it from if you would envision

your family out on the boat; and, you would envision that as being the positive family experience. I don't think that I have ever had a fight on a boat. I don't picture someone bringing their electronics, like your son or your daughter would. I think that it is not traditional. I don't know what I am really trying to say but, boating is positive and fishing is positive. (TB)

My son loves to fish and my daughter thinks this is a tradition, so, they love getting out there every chance that they get.

I think that my father and my husband are almost creating a tradition. They bond that way.

I gave this one a ten because all the males in our families fish. We all fish and that is a fact and that is a tradition.

I have a ten; my grandmother used to take me fishing. (TA)

- ***I may not catch a fish, but I'll catch up with my son/daughter.***

The Likert scale score on this message was in the middle range, 7.40, but the focus group participants' reaction were mixed. Some group members no longer fished with their children and these memories of past fishing experiences elicited a nostalgic response. The message was very well received by those with children. It was less positive among those who did not have or no longer had children.

Among some participants in Tampa, the message was not well received, primarily because they did not have children.

I thought about my husband and how he didn't have as much quality time as I did with the kids; so, he can catch up.

I gave it a really low number just because I don't have a son or daughter but as I am thinking about it, I think back to the time where my dad was teaching me how to bait a hook and it does help you to bond. It is believable. (Moderator: So is the issue that you don't have a child?) Yes. (What about "I may catch up with my father.") Umm hmm. (Moderator: The point is the connection.) Right. (TA)

I have friends that take their kids out. They have a good time playing in the water. I don't have any kids or anything, so, I'm not trying to catch up on anything.

It doesn't work for me because I have children, but they are grown, so... (TB)

One focus group participant in Denver said this had very high relevance to him.

My parents were divorced when I was young, and I didn't see my dad for ten years. And this was one of the things that we did because it was there and close. (DC)

For other participants, this message had no relevance.

Not applicable.

I put N/A, because I don't have a son or daughter. In reality, I would probably rate it as an eight or nine. I go fishing with my nephew a lot. If I had a son, I would say it would be an eight or nine.

The thought that "catching up" might be suspect was even noted by those with children, in the Cleveland group.

I had this higher earlier but I dropped it down because, as I said before, my son doesn't like to go fishing.

I gave it a three because I am not a great fisherman, so, I wouldn't be able to catch my son up on how great of a fisherman I am. I don't know that much about fishing.

I gave it a five. I wouldn't say catch up, I would say maybe bond or something. Catch up kind of sounds like you haven't seen each other in a while, and you want to go fishing.

I think you should get rid of catch up. When I think about fishing and fathers and sons, I think little kids not of big kids. I think about a little child and that you are teaching them.

I put a three. I don't have any children. (CO)

MESSAGES THAT DID NOT RESONATE WELL AMONG FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Not to belabor the point, but the messages that did not produce positive reactions did so for the same underlying reason; the respondents did not find them believable. There was some objection to some of the language used, but that was not the major issue. In most cases the message cannot be "fixed;" the message is off in concept, not merely in wording.

Other negative reactions arose by messages that contained connotations of selling or issues that the respondents did not associate with boating and/or fishing. A finding that deserves emphasis here is that the contribution of fishing and boating to the local community and to the conservation of natural resources was not seen as believable. This seems counter-intuitive and requires further investigation.

The following messages provoked the most divided reactions among the focus group participants in only some of the groups. This indicates that a message that does not work well for a general audience may work well for a smaller, segmented audience.

- ***Buy a rod, bait and some extra time with your family.***

This message had a middle-of-the-road Likert scale rating of 7.18. The initial focus group reactions in the Tampa groups were so poor that the message was eliminated from the Denver and Cleveland groups. “Buying” time with your family was viewed negatively.

That is suggesting that you have to buy extra time with your family by buying a rod and a reel.

That would be way down with me because I don't fish so [why] would I buy a rod?

I gave that one a low comment. I agree with him. It's like you are buying some time. If you don't have the time, you don't have it, whether you have a fishing pole or not. (TB)

It looks like it is targeted to someone who doesn't already have one and is looking to spend some time with their family through fishing.

It seems like the first word is trying to sell you something.

I gave it a three. (A three?) I don't like the word “buy” at the beginning of that statement. (TA)

- ***Fishing and boating supports the communities (places) you (we) cherish.***

The reaction to this in Tampa was so negative, 6.87, on the Likert scale, that it was eliminated from the other two groups. The primary objection was that the message was not believable.

This message, more than some of the others, provoked interestingly negative exchanges in the focus groups. For the most part, the focus group participants did not believe that fishing and/or boating supplied enough support for this message to be true. The idea that either fishing or boating, except for commercial fishing and/or boating, was a major economic issue, was not seen as believable.

Yea, I don't see how [that could be], unless you're talking about the financial gain from the boat dock and the mechanic. Other than that, it is a wear and tear on the resources. Boats driving through the grass and hitting manatees, and people taking everything.

Yea, I looked at it as far as the commerce side of it, as far as the bait shops and everything. But also the respect for the bay that we all live in, I cherish it; so, I think that I support it.

I interpreted it like the industry supporting the community and I can't think of anytime that I've seen a business that was associated with fishing or boating stepping out into the forefront of [a pollution] issue. You hear people talk about "Clean up the beaches and clean up the waterways," [but] you don't ever hear a boating or fishing company leading that effort. It's just usually been average Joe Shmoe. Right now, where I live, there is a big controversy about developing a canoe launch there. I've never seen anyone from the boating industry saying "This is a good idea" or "This is a bad idea." I just don't see it.

I couldn't see what significance it had. (TB)

It goes back to preserving things; I don't see how it supports anything. Well, fishing and boating doesn't help support many communities. It helps support a fishing village.

I don't see it.

A lot of people like myself do it as a recreational thing, so they are not spending hundreds and hundreds of dollars a week doing that. I don't really see how my \$30 or \$40 is going to help anything.

I don't think that you think that when you go fishing. That is not really what is on your mind.

It probably supports the beach community with all the boats.

Obviously the tourism that is generated out here, I think that the fishing and boating helps the community. (TA)

- ***Fishing and boating help preserve the waters where you first learned how to cast a rod.***

This message tested low in the overall ratings, 6.52 on the Likert scale. Participants did not find this to be a believable message. After rejection in the groups in Tampa, the message was modified as follows: "*Anglers and boaters help preserve the places where you discovered the joy of fishing and boating.*" However, this did not resonate well either.

It's almost like I read this statement and say, "It's not true." If anything it is an attack on the environment and hopefully people do it responsibly to not damage it permanently; but, at the same time, a lot of problems that we have with our waters are because of fishing and boating.

I just don't see how it would preserve anything because you are taking. You are taking the fish and putting foul things into the water, like gas and oil. (TB)

I don't see how fishing and boating could help to preserve waters. If anything it is going to pollute them. You have boat fumes and gas and all that stuff. I'm not saying that fishing and boating is bad; I just don't see how they can preserve them in any way.

Well, when you get down to the bottom of the statement and it says “When you first learned how to cast a rod,” and I am speaking for myself but I don’t think that I first learned how to cast a rod on a boat because I think that all of us went fishing when we were smaller instead of waiting until we were old enough to purchase a boat. I think that we all fished on a bank or something. It doesn’t match when you talk about boating and that is just me. (TA)

- ***Time spent on the water connects you to your heritage and builds your legacy.***

This was one of the most poorly rated messages with an overall Likert score of 5.46.

The primary issue here was that “time on the water” had little to do with the issue of “heritage” and “legacy.”

Boaters have a sense of pride and they probably had fathers who were boaters. I just think that if they have family to encourage them to fish as much as they did, and develop a likeness to it; then I think that it is. I don’t know.

Heritage goes way back to your great, great ancestors.

It doesn’t fit.

I just don’t know how it connects you to your heritage or builds your legacy. (TB)

My family has been fishing on the water and been on the water, but I don’t feel like it is my heritage or my legacy.

I rated this low; my father fishes and he likes to but I really don’t see that as very important.

It doesn’t specify what you are doing on the water. Fishing might build a legacy but that just says, “time spent on the water.” (TA)

I rated it high and more towards my family rather than my personal position. The rest of my family, my cousins, are all big fisherman. And the only time I really go is when I go back to my family, and we go. So, connecting to your heritage but not really building your legacy.

Five. I don’t connect to it as well as I do to a valued family activity. I see it more of a family activity than building my legacy.

I gave it a six. I think in way I connected with my grandfather but it was on a personal basis. It wasn’t too much about our heritage, other than his father fished before him and we went to the same places. What are you building? (DC)

I gave it a four. I would hate to think that my legacy was built around fishing or boating. I would like to think there was something a little more important.

I gave it a three. I personally wouldn’t base everything on fishing. It’s not that big in my family. We maybe do it once a month.

I gave it a four. It’s pretty much the same thing. Only one person likes it the rest of them don’t. (CO)

- ***Anglers and boaters help preserve the places where you discovered the joy of fishing and boating.*** (tested in Denver and Cleveland)

This message was rated lowest in the rankings. It received a score of 5.24 on the Likert scale. The objection in all cases was that only “some” anglers and boaters helped to “preserve” these areas while other anglers and boaters were, in fact, a problem.

I looked at it mostly from a financial perspective. I can see their point of view; and, while I've had experiences like that, I think as the resources get tighter and tighter we do a better job at managing. For instance, like taking a bucket of fish home, there are a lot more people who do catch and release now, even in saltwater. There are a lot people that will catch and release a lot of fish now. I know when I was growing up, that wasn't the case. When you went and caught 10 trout you brought ten trout home. I don't think that is as prevalent today as it was. We have a long way to go.

I think it is a false statement to me. It is like saying building a road through the canyon is preserving the beauty of it or something.

Like I said, it is a false statement. It just doesn't make any sense to me. How can you, fishing, preserve a place when you are taking fish out. If everyone takes out fish every trip then there isn't going to be any fish left. It's depletion of a natural resource.

Well, two things. One, is that it sounds like a blatant propaganda statement. It makes me wonder why that statement says what it does. It makes me question it. And the next thing is, number two, the places where I discovered the joy of fishing were private secluded places that now have roads paved up to them, that now have signs that say 'fishing and parking.' So, in a way, it infringes on my memories of those places from the past, to how they compare now.

...Well when you listen to both sides of it. I would say that anglers and boaters respect it more than the people who don't as much. The people who are into it more respect it more than the people who go hardly at all.

The part I like about it is that it conveys, at least from my perspective, the financial benefit that the, I'll call them, that sportsman, because that will cover more, whether you're out there boating with the ski thing behind or your on the show throwing out your bait or whatever. I just think they spend a lot time and a lot of money and I think both are important. You can spend all you want but if you don't have the respect of the time in that environment it don't do much good.

You know what I think it misses is it doesn't state how anglers and boaters preserve. And that is what is distressing. He brought up an incredible valid point there. But unless you are predisposed to thinking in those terms [financial contribution of anglers and boaters] you're not going to make that connection. Because it is not stated anywhere in that statement. If that what the objective of the statement to say, it is kind of like where you use to see those trucks that said, 'like this truck paid \$15,000 in road use taxes.' If that is your objective, to state that boaters and anglers are pouring a lot back into the system, then the statement needs to state that. If it is that anglers and boaters, out of their own personal love of nature, are doing their best on their own

volition to preserve it, then I think it is missing the mark. Cause a lot of people here obviously don't agree with that [boaters personally preserving nature.] (DC)

Some individuals in the Cleveland focus group gave this message a high score, although there were pronounced mixed opinions.

I don't see how anglers and boaters can preserve places. They are not out there cleaning up the area when they are not fishing.

I gave it a ten. I guess I am generous. My attitude is if you are a true angler or a true boater, you are going to go out there and take care of these places. You are going to go out there and get legislation to get all of the other people that are wrecking the property.

I think it is believable in a sense.

I get this impression that when you are a true angler and a true believer, you are going to give it [priority]. If you are not into it, then I can see why you are giving these answers; you are not a true angler or a true boater.

It just depends on what your view of it is.

A lot of places that I used to go fishing at are closed down. (CO)

MAJOR FINDINGS

Reception to the various messages fell into a few clear categories. Some messages and wording resonated strongly, while other messages and wording did not.

- Messages that appeal to associations with family/friends were rated high among those who already associated boating/fishing with family/friends. Messages concerning family and friends were most favorable among those who had fished/boated with children. This broad theme also resonated strongly among those who fished *as children*, eliciting many memories of being with family and friends as a child.
- Messages that emphasize the fact that boating and fishing can be associated with relaxation resonated strongly. The “quality time” association of boating and fishing is a very common perception, and messages about it will be well received. Furthermore, the focus groups showed that the *appreciation* of natural resources was viewed as one aspect of relaxation, and therefore this association should be used whenever possible as well.

- Messages that associate boating/fishing with both “deeper” concerns and more “concrete” issues are not particularly well received. Both fishing and boating are seen as *recreational* activities and linking them with “deeper” issues (with the exception of the deeply seated relationships between friends and family), does not resonate with most people. Associating recreational boating and fishing with a “legacy” or “heritage” does not resonate with most people. The economic contributions of fishing and boating to resource management and local economies were also not seen as believable to most participants. Before economic messages will be considered believable, major communications programs would need to be initiated to increase people’s understanding of the economic contributions of boating and fishing; something that is not currently understood or believed by many lapsed boaters and anglers.
- Many people in the focus groups did not see boating and fishing as contributing to the preservation and protection of natural resources. This finding is as problematic as it is so widely accepted and understood among professionals in the boating and fishing community. There were a few focus group participants in particular who felt strongly that boating and fishing *did* contribute to the preservation of natural resources, but there were others who felt just as strongly that they *did not*. For example, several participants felt recreational boating and fishing harmed the natural resources upon which they depend; therefore, messages related to fishing and boating contributing to the preservation of natural resources should be carefully used, given this finding. For many lapsed anglers and boaters, this is not a self-evident “truth.”

The message that tested highest overall (*On the water. . .no cars, no rush-hour, no deadline. . .no choice but to relax*) was subject to discussion and some differences of opinions.

Most of the discussion, in this case, centered on the issue of whether or not it was too emphatic to say “no choice” rather than “an opportunity” (or such language), to relax. The important consideration is that relaxation and the separation from such distractions as cars and rush-hour are important to boaters and anglers alike. The best way to phrase this message is probably “*a chance to relax*,” to soften the message. This will avoid the negative reaction to “no choice.”

Other messages subject to much positive discussion were those messages pertaining to the benefits of boating and fishing with family and friends. However, while these messages have high overall ratings, to those without a family or those who do not boat or fish with family and/or friends, the messages may be heard neutrally or even negatively. However, in general, messages about family and friends are excellent messages and will not provoke strong negative responses to many, but it is well to be aware of this potential.

It may seem intuitive that boating and angling enhance appreciation of nature, and for the most part, this research supports that contention. However, there is also the observation that some lapsed anglers and boaters disagree with the message. In fact, a known factor that some anglers become inactive is because of other anglers showing a lack of appreciation for nature (Duda, et al., 1998:634). This could be inferred to be an issue for boaters as well. A few lapsed boaters in these focus groups disagreed with the messages about the natural world, and there was a wider disagreement among boaters about the difference between “respect” and “appreciation.” Overall, “appreciation” resonated better than “respect.”

Messages that appeal to the idea that boating and/or angling increase “respect” for the natural world must be used carefully. The audience for these messages can be divided and may find the message basically unbelievable as to whether recreational boating and fishing increases “respect.” The best audience for this message (“respect”) is probably those known to already

have positive feelings in this area, such as avid anglers and boaters. There is also some indication that information and facts that support this message will insure increased acceptance of the message.

In general, there were negative responses to value laden words such as “tradition,” “heritage,” “legacy,” and so forth. These words were seen as inappropriate when used in conjunction with fishing and boating, which are seen as recreational activities and a means to an end, rather than an end in themselves. “Heritage,” “tradition” and “legacy” were viewed by most to be affiliated with such events as Christmas, Thanksgiving and extremely important family events. Even some of those individuals who supported messages containing value laden terms see the use of these words in a message campaign in an unpleasant light. Boating and fishing are valued activities, but they are not held as core values by the target audience of lapsed and infrequent anglers and boaters. Messages relating them to such should be avoided. Terms such as “tradition,” “legacy” and “heritage,” for general messages, should be avoided.

The negative responses to some messages should be taken as seriously as the positive responses. Some messages seemed, at first, to be intuitively acceptable, but when tested proved to be unacceptable. The ratings of messages concerning the economic contribution of boating and fishing to the community and the preservation or protection of natural resources were especially alarming. Most people that are involved with recreational boating and fishing understand that contributions to the community are real and significant. However, the results of these focus groups indicate that messages concerning fishing and boating and strong ties to economic benefits and preservation are not well received or believable to lapsed anglers and boaters.

There should be, at least, some preliminary research to determine if active and inactive anglers and boaters understand the connection between boating and fishing to local, regional and national issues, including fiscal contributions and the impact of fishing and boating on natural resources.

Based on the focus groups, three messages are recommended to communicate the benefits of recreational fishing and boating and aquatic stewardship with lapsed anglers and boaters. These three messages communicate three important benefits of recreational fishing and boating: relaxation, the value of recreational fishing and boating in fostering relationships among family and friends, and the aquatic resource stewardship values these activities can foster. Specifically, the three messages are:

- ***On the water, no cars, no rush hour, no deadline, a chance to relax.***
- ***Fishing and boating connects family and friends.***
- ***Fishing and boating enhances appreciation for the natural world.***

The first message is a variation on the message that tested highest, “On the water, no cars, no rush hour, no deadline, no choice but to relax. The “no choice” verbiage was changed to “a chance to relax” because of the possible negative reaction to the statement “no choice.” Americans like choice. In fact, the statement, “Freedom to choose” is often connected to issues to increase the acceptance level of that activity. For example, a much higher percentage of people will agree with the statement, “People should have the freedom to choose to wear fur if they want to,” as compared to the number of people who would support people simply “wearing fur.” In the focus groups there was some negative reaction to the “no choice” part of the statement. Another negative about the “no choice” verbiage was the fact that several focus group participants stated that sometimes boating and fishing weren’t *always* relaxing and the “no

choice” statement wasn’t 100% believable. When the message was changed to “On the water, no cars, no rush hour, no deadline, a chance to relax,” it was the highest rated message overall in the Cleveland group. For some reason, this message was not a highly rated message in Denver. However, based on all of the information, Message 1 is a very strong message.

The second message was not tested directly but will be an effective message based on numerous findings from the focus groups. Messages that appealed to fishing and boating with family and friends and the relationships that are fostered while participating in these activities resonated very strongly with most of the lapsed anglers and boaters. The message is also very specific, something that was quite important to focus group participants. Overall, specificity was favored over generalities. For example, instead of “people,” focus group participants preferred “family and friends.” And in most cases (with the exception of Message 1) preferred “fishing and boating” over “on the water.” It was noted that the “on the water” verbiage was not always connected to fishing and boating. For example, “on the water” could be interpreted as being on a cruise ship. Also, some anglers fish from the bank, so they technically are not “on the water.”

The third message resonated particularly well with focus group participants and is especially important in that it relays the aquatic resource stewardship aspect of recreational boating and fishing, something the focus groups showed was difficult for a message to do. Overall, many messages regarding stewardship issues were not well received or considered believable by focus group participants. This particular message did, however, resonate and can be used as an important starting point in conveying that recreational fishing and boating *are* important aspects of aquatic resource stewardship. This message was very believable to most participants from their personal experiences. Others agreed that if one participates in these recreational activities, they are more likely to appreciate the natural world and their surroundings

than someone who does not participate. Furthermore, *appreciation* of natural resources was viewed as one aspect of relaxation, a known motivational factor for recreational boating and fishing participation.

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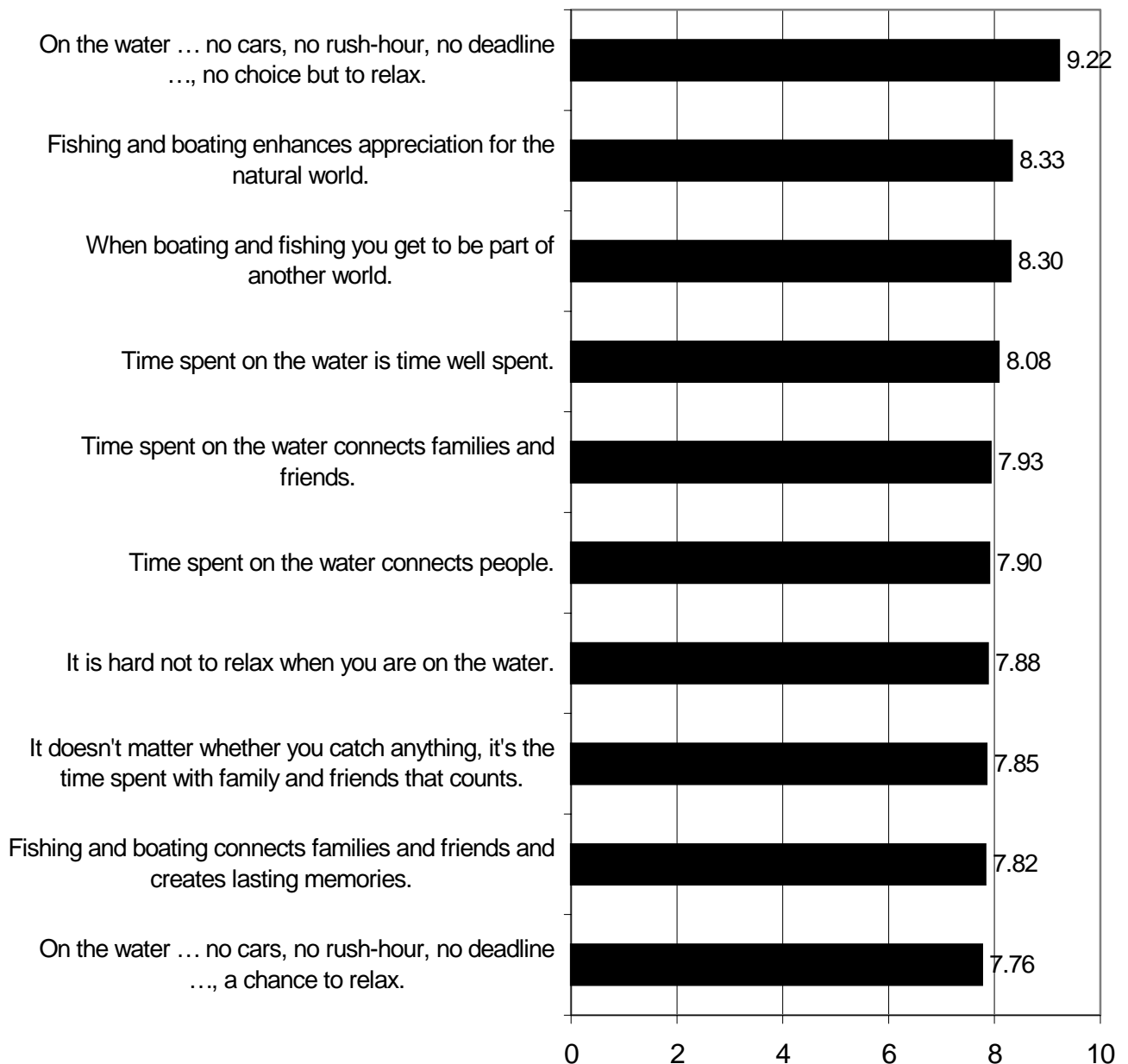
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GRAPHS

How well statements reflect positive feelings and thoughts about the importance of recreational fishing and boating. (Total Respondents)

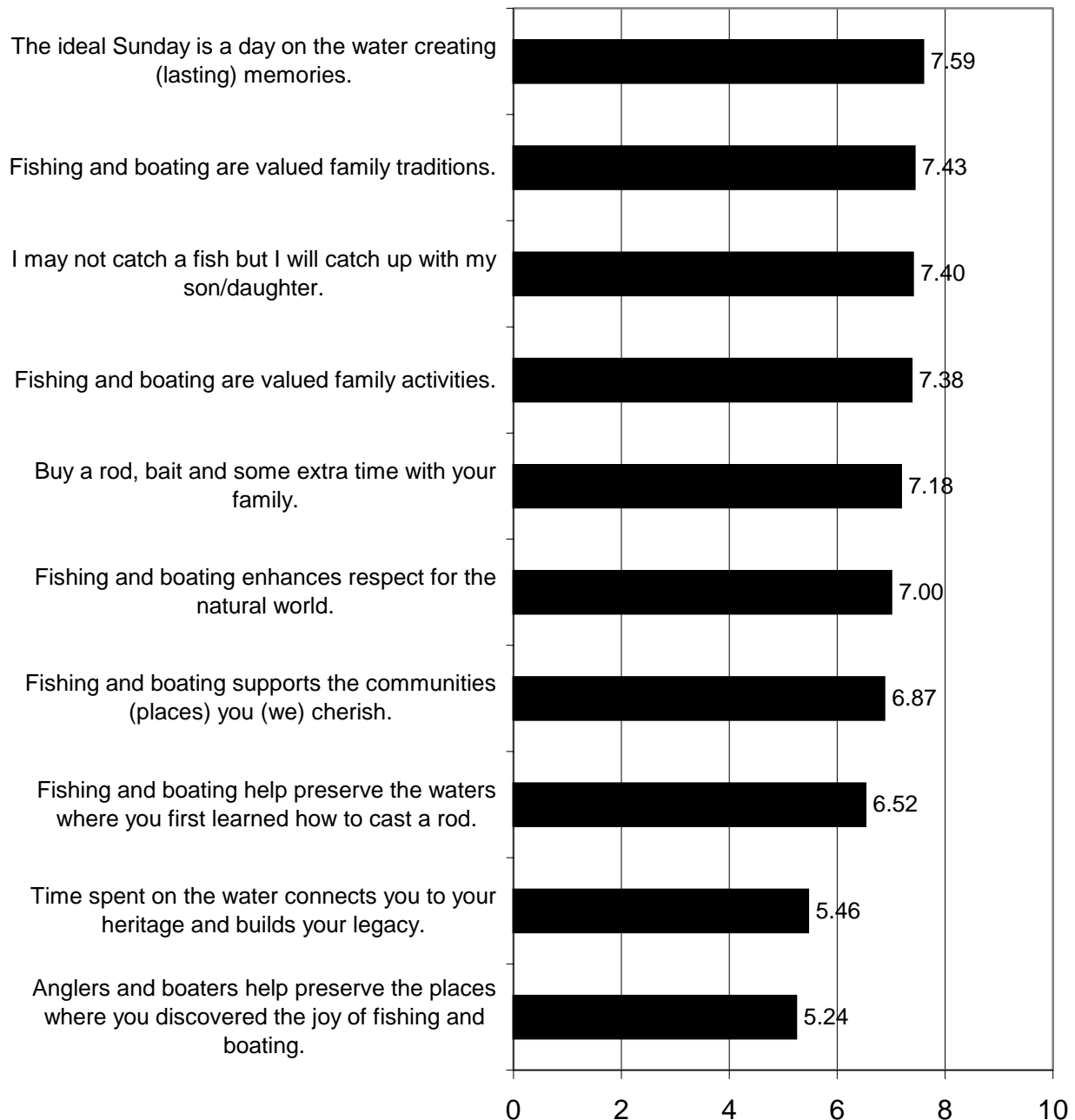


Mean Score (n=40) on 1 to 10 Point Scale:

1 = does not at all represent my positive thoughts and importance;

10 = it very much represents my positive thoughts and importance.

**(Continued) How well statements reflect
positive feelings and thoughts about the
importance of recreational fishing and boating.
(Total Respondents)**

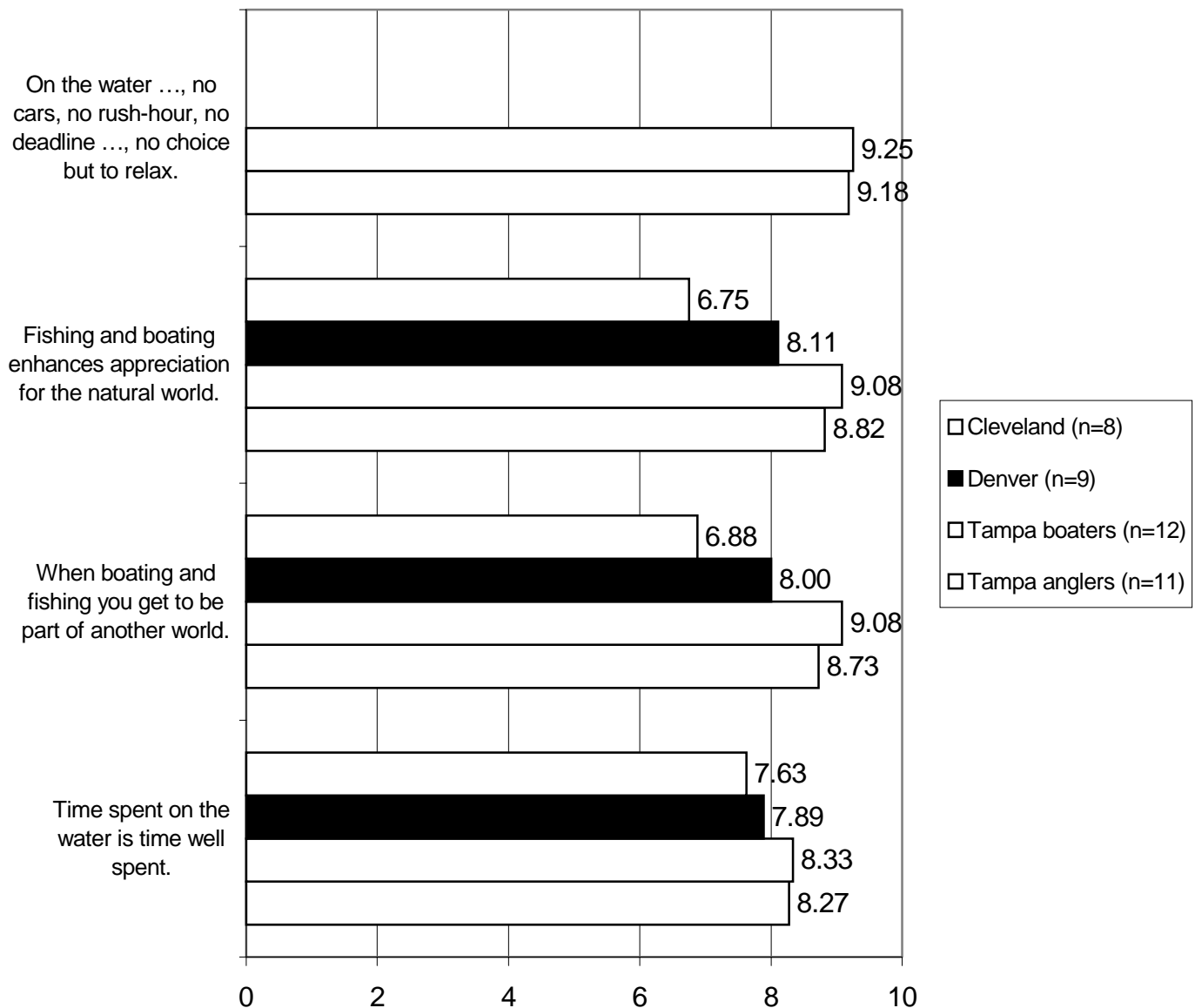


Mean Score (n=40) on 1 to 10 Point Scale:

1 = does not at all represent my positive thoughts and importance;

10 = it very much represents my positive thoughts and importance.

How well statements reflect positive feelings and thoughts about the importance of recreational fishing and boating. (By Groups of Respondents)

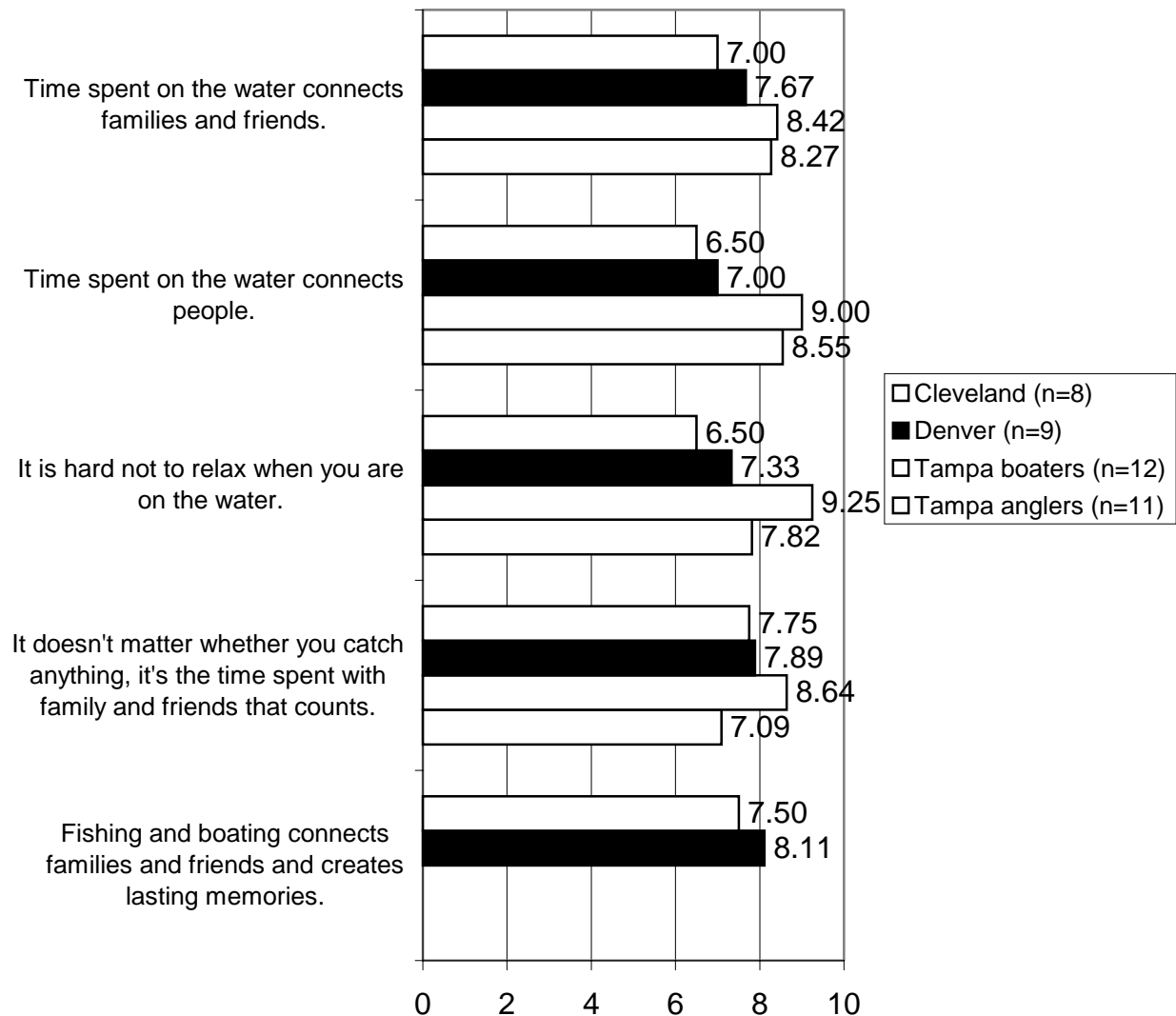


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1 = does not at all represent my positive thoughts and importance;

10 = it very much represents my positive thoughts and importance.

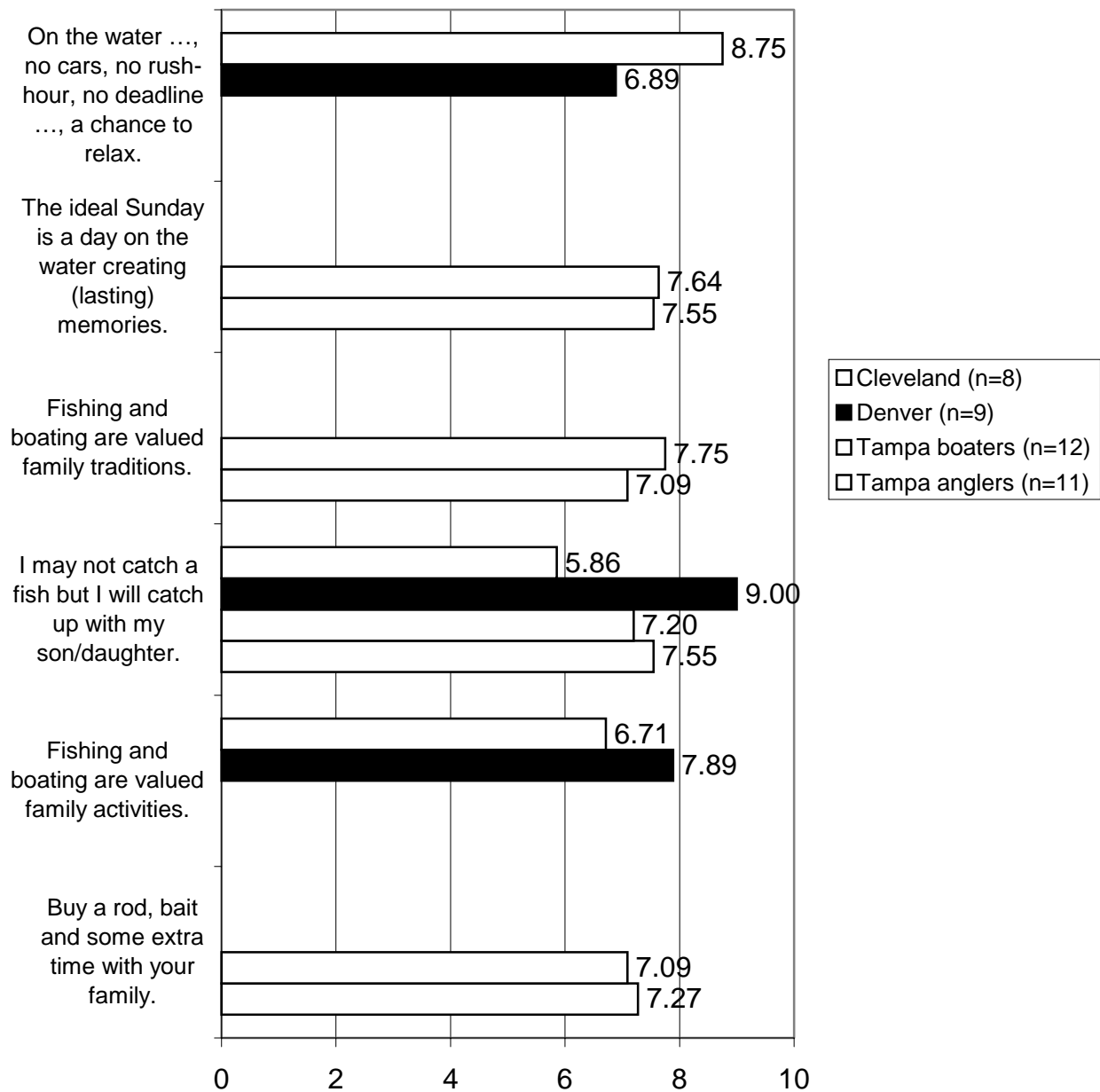
**(Continued) How well statements reflect
positive feelings and thoughts about the
importance of recreational fishing and boating.
(By Groups of Respondents)**



Mean Score on 1 to 10 Point Scale:

**1 = does not at all represent my positive thoughts and importance;
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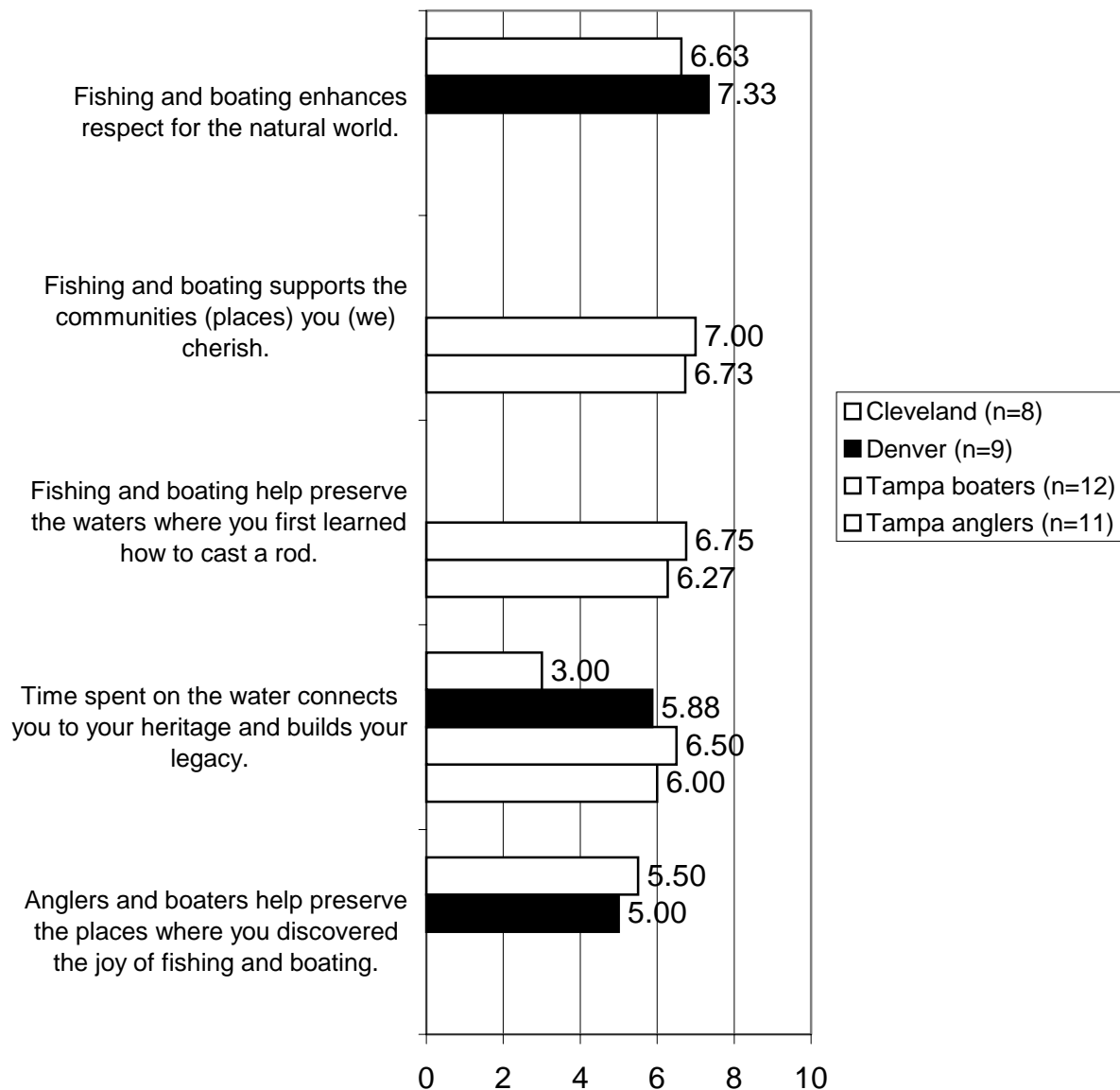
**(Continued) How well statements reflect
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